

400 Block of South Rampart Street

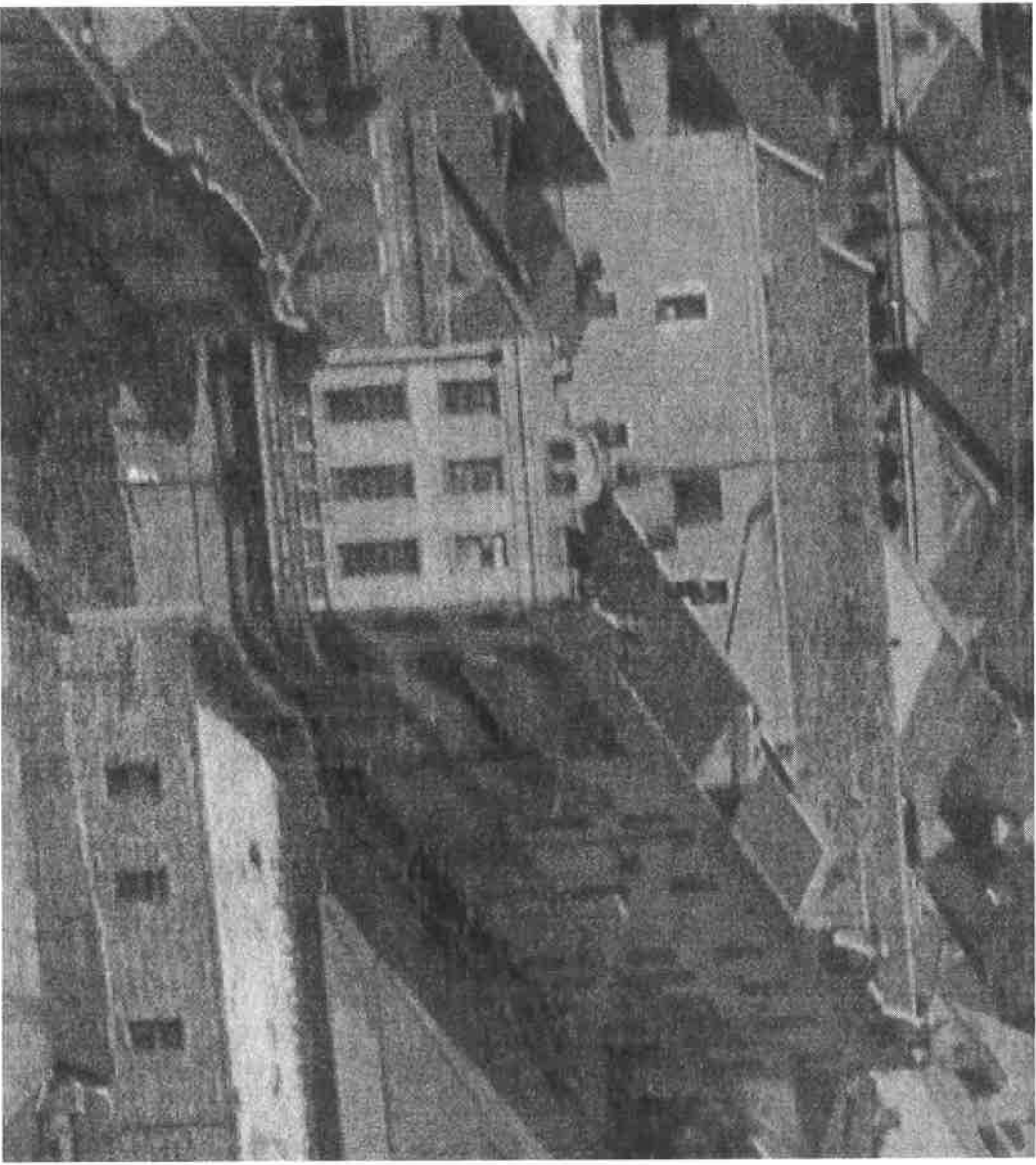


Figure 1. Historic Photograph, from 1922 showing corner of South Rampart Street and Perdido.

Architectural Rating: Green

Construction Date: 401-03 c. 1885
413-15 c. 1900-1908
427-31 c. 1905-1915
445-49 c. 1889

Architect: Unknown

Site Description: 401-03 Square 297, Lot 23
413-15 Square 297, Lot 26
427-31 Square 297, Lot 6, 7, 8
445-49 Square 297; Lot A, B, C

Municipal District: 1st

Assessment District: 4th

Zoning: CBD-1

Owner: 401-03 New Orleans Music Hall of Fame, Inc.
413-15 Arlene and Joseph Meraux
427-31 Arlene and Joseph Meraux
445-49 Egenberg and Sons Construction

Nomination Information

Date Nominated: September 7, 1993

The nomination of these properties was based upon their architectural as well as their social, political, economic and cultural significance to the history of New Orleans. City Ordinance No. 6699 MCS defines a Landmark or Landmark site as: "A building(s) (landmark) and/or its lot of record or any part thereof or vacant sites (landmark site), wheresoever located in the Central Business District of the City of New Orleans subject to the jurisdiction of the Central Business District Historic District Landmarks Commission, of particular historic, architectural, or cultural significance, which said landmark and/or landmark site meets at least one of the following criteria: 1) Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community; or 2) Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state, or local history; or 3) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or 4) Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized."

History of the Properties

The 400 Block of South Rampart Street was once a vibrant African-American commercial and entertainment district that is now celebrated for its ties to the birth of jazz. It was in these buildings that the talents of many important early jazz musicians were showcased during the turn-of-the-century.

In the first half of the twentieth century, South Rampart Street was lined with drugstores, saloons, barber shops, live music venues, grocery stores, second hand stores, and pawn shops (see figures 2 and 3). The four buildings remaining on the 400 block of South Rampart Street are each individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register designation report sites South Rampart Street as the “hub of black life” and “main street for blacks in New Orleans.” The bars, saloons, stores, hotels and restaurants along South Rampart Street catered to African-Americans under rigid segregation laws. The stores and bars were once frequented by jazz pioneers such as Louis Armstrong, Buddy Bolden and Jelly Roll Morton. The surrounding residential neighborhood was home to many of these same musicians. Louis Armstrong lived two blocks away at 1303 Perdido and Jelly Roll Morton was born and raised on Perdido Street between Liberty and Howard Streets, just a few blocks from these buildings. South Rampart Street was part of the area known as the “back of town,” one of the city’s most important neighborhoods in the development of early jazz. Immortalized with the 1930s tune *South Rampart Street Parade*, the several block long strip was particularly known for its numerous tailor shops and entertainment venues.

A quote from the documentary “Music of South Rampart Street”, captured South Rampart Street’s importance: “They came to shop, they came to promenade, they came dressed up, but for whatever reason they came to South Rampart Street.” The “they” were mostly African-Americans with a healthy mixture of Jews, Italians, and Chinese. Many Jews were proprietors of South Rampart’s tailor shops and pawn shops. Grocery stores tended to be owned and operated by Italians. An important component of South Rampart’s clientele was the “excursion” crowd. These were people from nearby rural

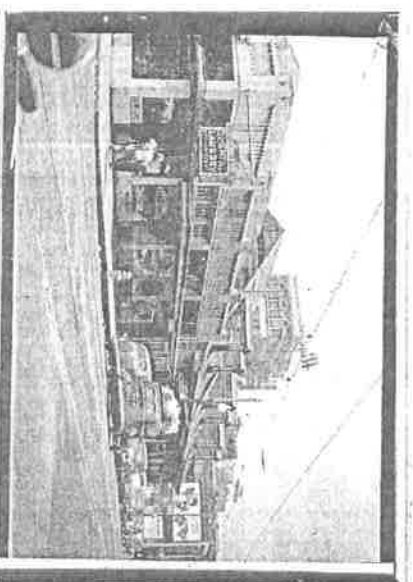
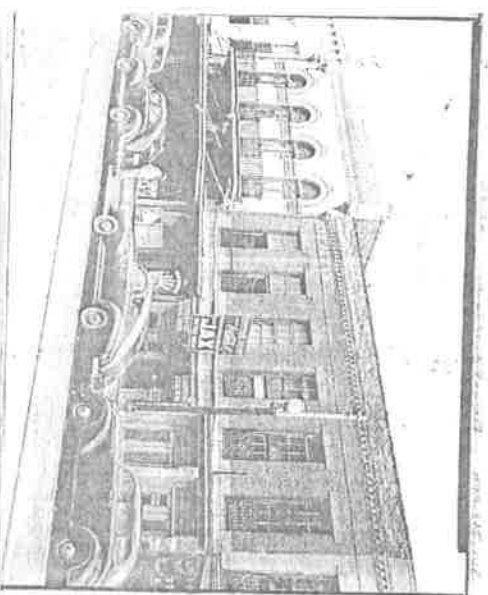


Figure 2 above and 3 below: South Rampart Street when it was a major commercial entertainment district. Courtesy of the Williams Research Center.



areas who came to South Rampart Street on Friday evenings and Saturdays, typically arriving by train or bus, and often staying the night in a hotel or rooming house. As one observer noted, referring to the crowds, "You couldn't get on this street on Friday evening and Saturday."

The history of jazz is littered with folklore, myth and conflicting interpretation. The traditional view is that jazz originated in New Orleans in the first decade of the twentieth century. Focus then shifted northward to Chicago and New York, as jazz expanded and evolved. The first known jazz recording was made in 1917. The music became wildly popular in the 1920s. The city's rich ethnic diversity, the immediate influences of ragtime and blues, which reached New Orleans in the 1890s, the call and response of the black Baptist church, New Orleans long time mania with music and dancing and the influence of Creole musicians created the perfect environment for the birth of jazz. It was something new and different and was being played all over New Orleans. The 400 block of South Rampart Street was an important part of the jazz scene until the mid 1920s.

Like other urban retail corridors, South Rampart Street's decline began in the late 1950s/early 1960s. The street's advanced deterioration and location on the edge of the Central Business District made it an ideal for slum clearance and surface level parking lots. The necessity for surface parking was fueled with the destruction in the late 1950s of "black Storyville" for a municipal complex and other government buildings (see figure 4). Tragically, very little survives in New Orleans of the literally hundreds of early jazz venues, not to mention homes of jazz pioneers. Both Louis Armstrong's birthplace and childhood home are now occupied by modern

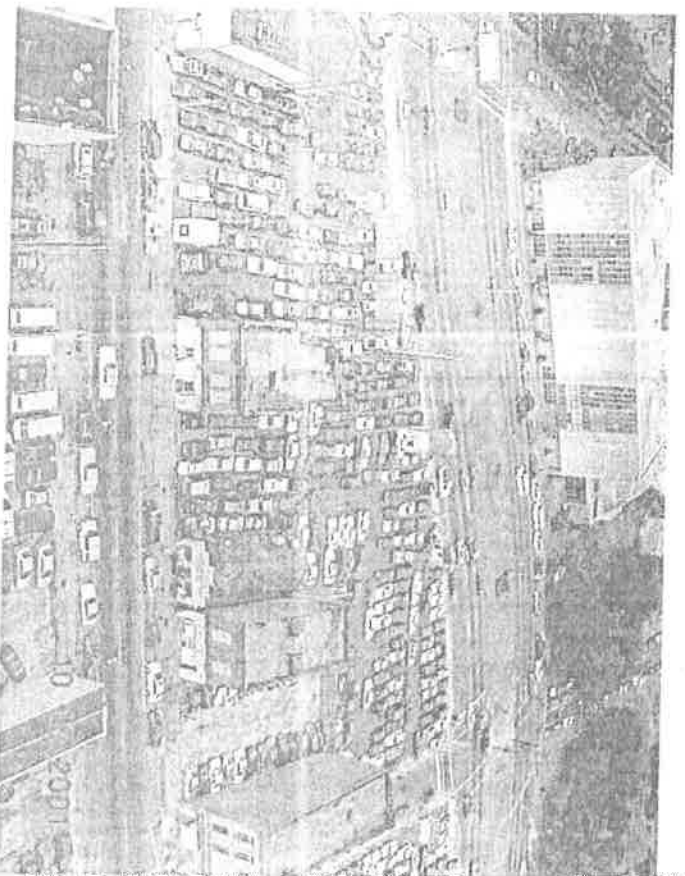


Figure 4: An aerial view of the 400 Block of South Rampart Street illustrates how the remaining buildings are surrounded by parking lots.

government complexes. The buildings of the 400 block of South Rampart Street are locally significant as the rare survivors that represent a once flourishing entertainment/business district which stretched from Canal Street to Howard Avenue. They are now surrounded by a sea of surface parking lots. These

buildings have survived against considerable odds as they have stood vacant for decades and have constantly been threatened with demolition by neglect and demolition for large scale redevelopment.

401-03 South Rampart Street- The Eagle Café and Saloon and the Masonic and Odd Fellows Hall:

The building first appears on the Sanborn Insurance Map of New Orleans in 1885 with a footprint of a three bay deep masonry commercial building. The first available photograph, from 1922, shows the building and the back building, now demolished, to be identical in detailing. The detailing is not that of the present Classical Revival building (see figure 1 on cover). The photo shows a different parapet treatment and fenestration pattern than exists today (see figures 5 and 6). The 1922 parapet featured prominent round pediments and with finials on the corners. In addition to the parapet change, the three openings on the façade's third story were lengthened to match those immediately below and more openings were cut into the long side elevation. By 1928, the building had been remodeled to its present Classical Revival style.

The three story, stucco building has a history entwined with that of a three story building that once stood to the rear. In the late nineteenth century, the buildings housed a furniture business (See figures 7 and 8). By the turn-of-the-century the rear building was occupied by the newly formed Masons and Odd Fellows Association, as was the third floor of 401-03 South Rampart. The Odd Fellows Ballroom was very important early jazz venue where guests such as Buddy Bolden and the Robichaux Orchestra played the still emerging music form. It is unclear whether the ballroom was in the now demolished building or the third floor of 401-04 South Rampart. The only original source uncovered to date is an advertisement for a "Grand masquerade ball" to be given by the Father and Son Social Club on November 29, 1906 with music by Robichaux's Orchestra; the location is given as "Masonic-Odd Fellows hall, Rampart at Perdido."



Figure 5: Photos and excerpt from "Not a Jazz Funeral." Times Picayune. 7/23/05.

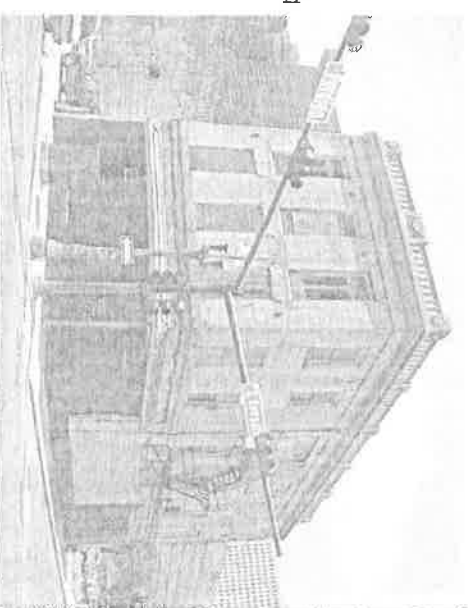


Figure 6: 401-03 S. Rampart Street, September 9, 2008

The earliest recorded tenants of the building at 401-03 South Rampart Street were a second hand store and loan office from the years 1904 through 1907. The Eagle Saloon, which is quite legendary among jazz enthusiasts and historians, was located at ground level of 401-03 South Rampart from 1908 until at least 1916.

In 1908, Frank Douroux opened and operated The Eagle Café and Saloon until 1913. Per an announcement carried in the local paper, the grand opening of the "Eagle Saloon" took place on January 6, 1908. The saloon was identified as occupying Jake Itzkovitch's Eagle Loan Office. The Eagle name is generally regarded by jazz historians as progressing from the pawnshop, to the saloon, to the famous Eagle Band. Its members included clarinetist Big Eyed Louis Nelson, trumpeter Buddy Petit, and drummer Abby Foster. The Eagle Band is the successor to Buddy Bolden's Band. Buddy Bolden was among the earliest musicians to play jazz and is considered the father of jazz.

The evolution of the store front area is not known completely, although it is clear from the interior and other evidence that there were two businesses across the façade at some point in the building's history (later made into one space by removing a wall). Around 1935, following the repeal of prohibition, Joseph Lefant operated a liquor store at No. 401 until 1938. Then the property became the Dixie Beer Parlor. Today the store front is the same configuration as that shown in a circa 1946 photo (see figure 8).

By 1937 the Perdido Street elevation was comprised of small shops, each with their own entrance. The Knox Trouser Co. and the Slipakoff Pant Co. were doing business at the 1106 Perdido Street address and a barber shop usually occupied the No. 1114 Perdido storefront.

Currently the three-story, stucco over brick Eagle Saloon fronts onto South Rampart Street at the corner of Perdido Street. The stucco is scored to resemble stone. The parapet is a pierced balustrade with garlanded blocks anchored at each end by panels with shield designs. The same shield design is repeated numerous times down the side elevation. There are keystones and voussoirs over

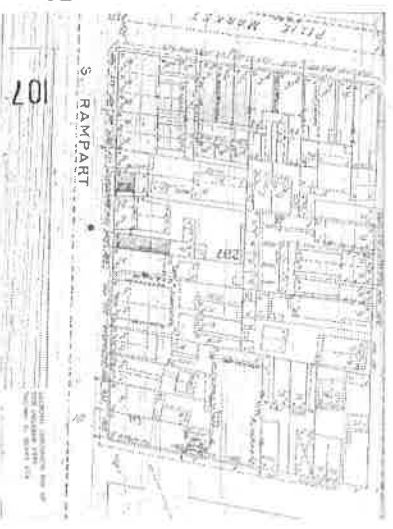
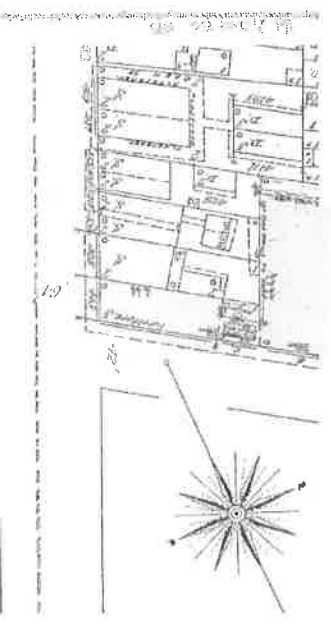


Figure 7 above: 1886 Sanborn map of 400 Block of South Rampart Street.
Figure 8 left: 1895 map of 400 Block of South Rampart Street.



the double hung, one-over-one windows on the second and third floors. The ground floor bays incorporate fenestration that consists of a series of projecting and recessed display windows and doors. The pierced balustrade and garlanded blocks of the parapet reflect the strong influence of the late 18th Century French architecture upon the Neo-classical Revival style. The third floor of the South Rampart Street façade maintains three French doors with transoms that once opened onto a balcony. While the balcony no longer exists, the outline is still apparent on the exterior face. Along with the third floor, the second floor may have had a balcony wrapping from the Rampart to Perdido Street elevations, again suggesting a remodel of the exterior. Toward the rear of the Perdido Street elevation is the entrance to the upper floors, marked by a large stone cartouche and ornamental stone brackets. More recently, the rear quarter of the building collapsed leaving a vacant portion of the lot.

The Historic Sites and Structures Subcommittee of the National Park Service Jazz Advisory Commission, co-chaired by respected jazz educator Ellis Marsalis and former Congresswoman Lindy Boggs gave the building a rating of 3 (the highest rating possible) associated with the category of early development of jazz history. This rating was due to the strong connection of the Eagle Saloon with the rise and popularity of Charles "Buddy" Bolden and his successor, trombonist Frankie Dusen (leader of the Eagle Band), as is well documented in Donald Marquis, In Search of Buddy Bolden(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). The building retains integrity as being a representative of buildings from the era when jazz was being developed in turn-of-the-century New Orleans.

413-15 South Rampart Street- Iroquois Theater:

This two-story, two-bay brick commercial building first appears in the 1908 edition of the Sanborn Insurance Map (See figure 10). The rusticated ground floor has been altered; however, its present configuration of a major center entrance, two minor doors and what may be a ticket window may date from the building's period of historic significance of 1912-1920 (see figure 9).

The Iroquois' upper floor is highlighted by decorative brickwork, including a corbelled effect at the parapet with a layered treatment below and a brick band which extends around the two segmental windows to create

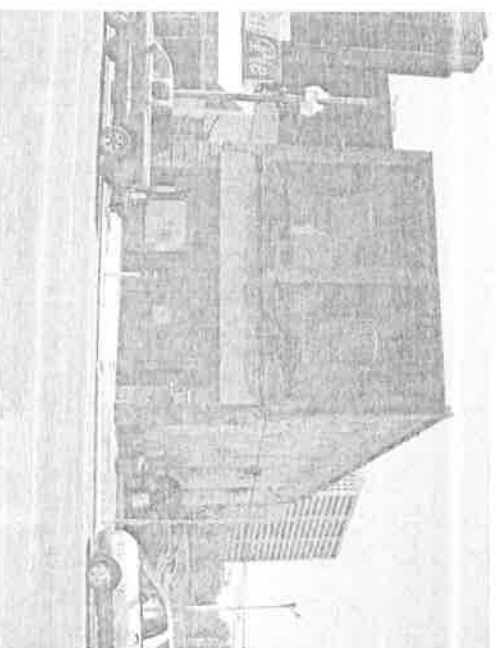


Figure 9: Iroquois Theater. September 9, 2008

pronounced hood molds. Pilaster-like members define the two bays (one at each corner and down the middle). The two bay wide, second floor façade is

an excellent example of the decorative brickwork often employed in the turn of the century commercial and industrial construction. The two segmental-arched, two over two, double hung windows are set into large recessed panels framed by pier strips. The entrance is set back under a large opening framed by a brick faced lintel and two simple pilasters on each side. The double doors are flanked by two single side exit doors and a ticket window. The original transoms are visible on the interior.

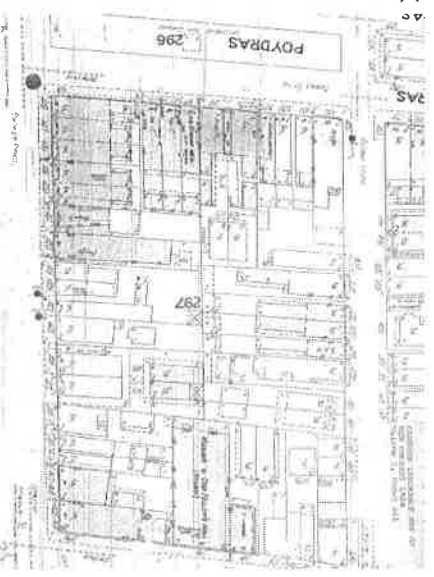


Figure 10: 1908 Sanborn Map of 400 Block of South Rampart Street

George A. Thomas bought the property in 1909 and leased it to Paul L. Ford who first opened for business as the Iroquois Theater in 1912. Paul Ford was the son of Judge Thomas J. Ford, a well connected politico. Listings in Soards' New Orleans City Directory suggest he gave up a career as an attorney with his father's law firm to run the Iroquois Theater. The Iroquois Theater gained fame as the place where African-American crowds watched vaudeville and jazz shows as well as movies. Like most white owners of African-American vaudeville houses, Paul Ford delegated the matter of artistic control to various black managers and players.

A review of the Oral History Collection of the Hogan Jazz Archive and the "Theatrical" columns of two nationally distributed African-American weeklies- the *Chicago Defender* and the Indianapolis *Freeman* - leaves no doubt that the Iroquois Theater was the home of early blues and jazz activity. From 1913 to 1920, the Iroquois Theater was on the creative front line of distinctly African-American entertainment in New Orleans. The Iroquois first appeared in *The Freeman* during the final months of 1912. The first act known to play at the Iroquois stage was that of Wallace M. Stovall and Nina Mitchell, appearing as Stovall & Stovall.

The Freeman also reported that Zolile Ford, and the Too Sweets were at the Iroquois Theater. Too Sweets were a prime example of the husband-and-wife comedy team format that dominated African-American vaudeville, mixing confrontational humor with vernacular dancing and blues singing. In addition to performing at the theater during the summer of 1913, Butler "String Beans" May, a provocative singer-pianist who became the first full-blown,

Look What Has Happened
 Butler May has opened a new house in New Orleans
 playing all the best "Vaudeville" acts in the city. He is
 now playing at the new house. All good acts will be at once. See and
 hear the best of all times. Address
Iroquois Theatre
 Rampart Street, New Orleans, La.
 PAUL FORD, Producer
 STRING BEANS, Mgr.

ADDIE JACKSON
 DAINTY SOUBRETTE
 Opening at the Iroquois Theatre Saturday, July 19. Opening at the
 Erie Theatre, Mobile, Ala., July 21.

Sweetie-May & JACKSON--Addie
 Those Dainty Little Girls
 Some Team, Some Act
 Iroquois Theatre, New Orleans, La.

Block ads for the Iroquois Theater. (From *The Freeman*, Summer 1913)

Figure 11: Excerpts from the *Freeman*. Courtesy of the Jazz Archivist publication.

professional blues star, served as the Iroquois Theater's stage manager.

Because so much emphasis has been placed on Storyville as the birthplace of jazz, it is important to note that many players at the Iroquois Theater also performed in Storyville's cabarets, including Abby Sutton, Aggie Tansel, Williams and Odum Company, and Hamtree Harrington. In 1916, the Iroquois Theater featured Billie and Mary Mack, Miss Gertrude Williams and Edna Landry, and Charles Arrant, known for his eccentric slide trombone playing.

In the spring of 1917, Clarence Williams, a jazz pioneer in every sense, and the great New Orleans-born guitarist Lonnie Johnson accompanied by his piano-playing brother James "Steady Roll" Johnson were regulars at the Iroquois. Lonnie Johnson went on to play and record with some of the most important musical groups in jazz history and he is considered to be among the preeminent blues and jazz guitarists of all time. Drummer Eddie "Rabbit" Robinson and pianist Louis Wade also played the Iroquois with their fellow blues and jazz pioneers. In addition, Muriel Ringgold, the leading black comedienne performed at the theater.

At some point during its history, the Iroquois Theater stage was graced by Louis Armstrong. Armstrong left a note in one of his unpublished memoirs, to the effect that he would go to see movies at the Iroquois for ten cents, and that he "dipped (his) face in flour" and won an amateur contest. One of Armstrong's old neighborhood friends, Godfrey Moore, was identified in the 1914 Soards' Directory as a "ticket taker" – and resident – of the Iroquois Theater.

The last city directory listing for Paul L. Ford as proprietor of the Iroquois was in 1919. Live vaudeville entertainment was not as popular at the Iroquois after 1920. There was increased competition from the new Lyric Theater on the corner of Burgundy and Iberville streets that opened as a black vaudeville house in 1919. The Iroquois became a moving picture theater until 1927. The competition of Loew's State Theater that opened at 1108 Canal on April 3, 1926 as the mainstream picture palace brought an end to the building's use as a theater.

At some time, the building was converted into general commercial use; however, various aspects of its interior theater character are still evident. While the stage and fixed seats are gone, the interior is still largely one open room. There are two small rooms at the very rear where the stage would have been.

The building still retains its identity as an early twentieth century commercial building that helps to convey the historic role of South Rampart Street as a flourishing commercial/entertainment district for mainly African Americans.

The Iroquois Theater is noted for being nationally significant in the area of entertainment/recreation as one of the very few venues for early jazz remaining in New Orleans. In fact, when a congressionally authorized jazz study was published in 1993, the Iroquois was among fourteen properties identified as having the greatest associative potential and deemed to be of national significance. The Historic Sites and Structures Subcommittee of the National Park Service Jazz Advisory Commission also gave this building a rating of 3 (the highest rating possible) associated with the category of early development of jazz history. The building's association with important jazz artists and the cultural history of New Orleans is significant. It was the performance place of many blues and jazz pioneers including, Clarence Williams, drummer Eddie "Rabbit" Robinson and pianist Louis Wade.

427-31 South Rampart Street- Karnofsky's Store/Morris Music:

This building known as Karnofsky's was owned and operated by a Russian Jewish family. The 1915 edition of the Soard's directory indicates that Louis Karnofsky resided at and operated a second hand store at 427 South Rampart Street. In the 1916 edition, his widow, Mrs. Tillie Karnofsky, is listed as the proprietress of a second hand business and a tailoring shop, assisted by her daughter and several sons. The Karnofsky's are famous for befriending a young Louis Armstrong, who was born and raised in violence and vice ridden "black Storyville." Armstrong relates in unpublished memoirs that as a youngster he worked for Louis Karnofsky's junk business. He recalls quite lovingly the nurturing atmosphere of the Karnofsky home, where he was always welcome and asked to stay for dinner. He writes of blowing a small tin horn as he worked on the Karnofsky wagon and the Karnofsky's loaning him money on his salary to buy a real horn he had seen in a pawn shop window. It is not documented that these compelling remembrances took place at 427-31 South Rampart Street. The Karnofsky's lived in a tenement on Girod Street, a few blocks from Armstrong's home until 1913 when they moved to 427 South Rampart Street. By this time Armstrong was 12 years old. He spent the better part of 1913 and 1914 in the Colored Waifs Home. Presumably he renewed his friendship with the Karnofsky's at their new home, for he was in contact with them through his career, but a strong connection to Armstrong with this building is not documented.

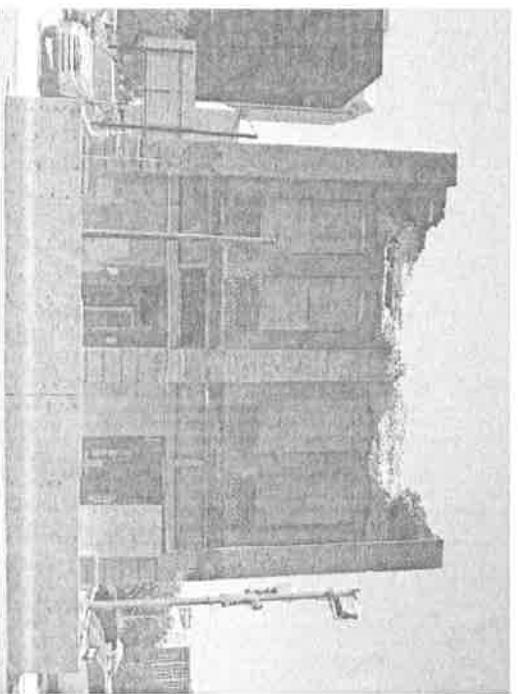


Figure 12: 427-31 S. Rampart St. Karnofsky's Store. September 9, 2008

In 1922, one of the sons, Morris Karnofsky, opened the Music Shop at 427 South Rampart Street. It became Morris Music, the first jazz music store catering to African-Americans. As the first jazz record shop in New Orleans, the Morris Music Shop specialized in the sale and repair of phonographs. By 1925, the Morris Music Shop had been relocated to 746 South Rampart Street and by 1930 to 230 South Rampart. Another son, Alex Karnofsky, continued to conduct a tailoring business at 427 South Rampart Street into the 1930s. By 1938, No. 427 was vacant and 431 was occupied by the Guarantee Barber Supply Co.

The four bay wide, two story brick double commercial building features rusticated piers framing the ground floor façade and segmental-arched, two over two double-hung windows set into the recessed panels framed by pier strips and projecting panels, belt courses and drip molds (see figure 12). Like the Iroquois Theater building, this building has highly decorative brick work that is a distinguishing characteristic of the turn-of-the-century masonry architecture. The upriver elevation features segmental arched windows, while the downriver elevation shared a party wall at one time. The shop front at 427 retains a glazed tile bulkhead. The recessed entrance displays "The Model Taylors" in tile along with the address. There are remnants of painted signs on the side of the building.

The building housed two shops at the ground level, each with residential space above. The front section of the building is slightly wider than that at the rear. Piers of brick at the upper story and rusticated at the lower define each edge and divide the building at the center.

The building still retains its identity as an early twentieth century commercial building that helps to convey the historic role of South Rampart Street as a flourishing commercial/entertainment district for mainly African Americans.

445-49 South Rampart Street:

Numbers 445, 447 and 449 South Rampart Street combine to form a continuous commercial block in the Italianate Style. The two story brick buildings were originally constructed as five row houses in 1889. Despite a long history of conversion and alterations, the buildings still convey enough of their appearance to represent the once-thriving commercial scene of South Rampart Street.

The vacant property was purchased on January 7, 1868, by Francis C. Roder, a native of Germany, who immigrated to New Orleans in 1842. From the tax assessment records, the present building was built in 1889 as five townhomes, three of which survive today. These buildings had a substantial increase in the assessment in 1906-08 indicating that they underwent substantial remodeling in which the first floors became commercial while retaining the residential use of the second floors. When Frank Roder died, all of his property was sold. The

description in the 1909 auction described the property as follows:

449 S. Rampart- Block 297, Lot A- approximately 20 feet by 75 feet, with improvements that "comprise a two story store and dwelling occupied on the ground floor as a Barroom"

445-47 S. Rampart- Block 297, Lots B & C, approximately 37 feet by 75 feet, with improvements that "comprise a large double, two-story brick store and dwelling occupied on the ground floor as a Grocery".

A four foot wide alley ran behind each of the properties. These properties were sold to Sam Farfel and the transfer was recorded February 18, 1909.

The ground floors of 445, 447, and 449 South Rampart were used over the years for some of the street's "signature" businesses. The 1904 edition of the Soard's directory indicates that 445 South Rampart Street was occupied by the second hand store and residence of Mr. Harris Dultz. Harris Dultz eventually operated furniture and shoe stores on South Rampart Street in addition to his second hand store. The buildings of 445 and 447 South Rampart Street housed hardware, second hand, tailor shops and shoe stores well into the 1930s (see figures 13).

By 1904, 449 South Rampart Street was distinguished as a saloon associated with early jazz development. In addition to being the proprietor of the Eagle Saloon, Frank Douroux also operated a saloon at 449 South Rampart. The saloon was considered a tonk (better known as a honky tonk) and was managed by Benjamin Mulligan and featured live music of the early jazz era.

With the advent of prohibition, twenty years of saloon business at 449 South Rampart Street came to an end. By 1926, the building was the loan office of David Pallet and a sign identifying the office remained in place until 1949 (see figure 14).

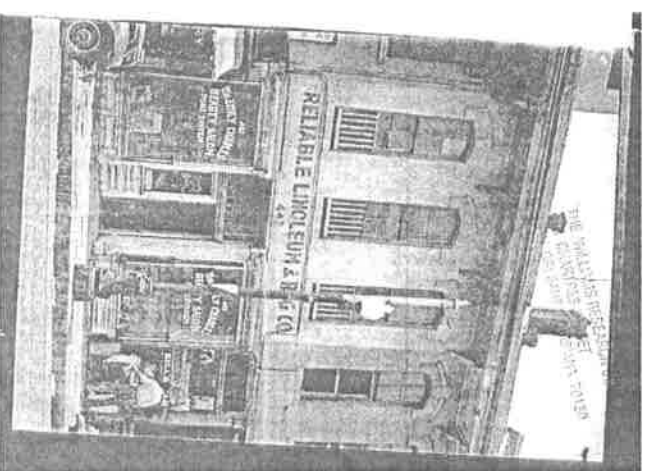


Figure 13: 447 S. Rampart c. 1945. Courtesy the Williams Research Center.

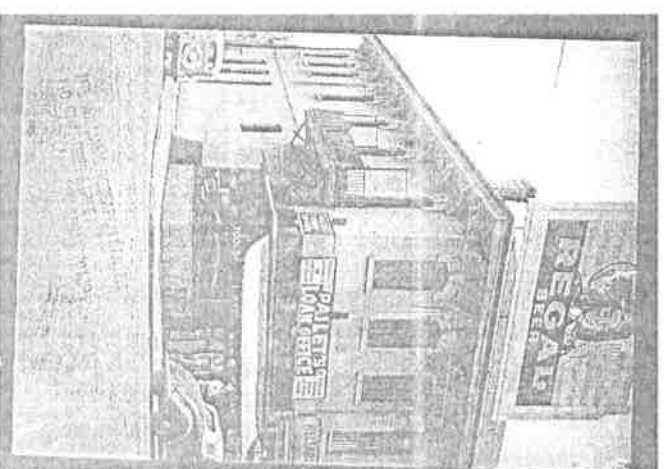


Figure 14: 449 S. Rampart c. 1945. Courtesy the Williams Research

Currently, the building at 445-449 South Rampart Street includes three party-wall commercial buildings that were constructed as part of a continuous row of five row houses with balconies and rear service wings. Except for 439 South Rampart (now lost), each had a three bay façade. The row featured a continuous roofline of modest pitch and formed a hip where it turned the corner at the intersection of Rampart Street and Poydras. Sanborn maps show a fire wall extending eighteen inches above the roof between # 445 and its now lost neighbor and a fire wall of the same height at the end of the five units. The roof had a generous overhang featuring Italianate brackets with ball drops. The soffits of the eaves had recessed panels and regularly spaced decorative cast iron vents. In keeping with the Italianate style, the buildings featured regularly spaced segmental arched openings with pronounced keystones. Tax assessment records indicate that the buildings were constructed around 1889. Very early in their history, as previously mentioned, the houses were converted for commercial use below with residences above. The 1908 Sanborn map lists the buildings as shops. The conversion entailed the installation of a commercial store front on the first story with plate glass windows and decorative cast iron columns. The paneled columns featured a roundel at mid point and stylized leaf-form capitals.

In later years there were more changes. The balconies were removed, the buildings were stuccoed and some of the windows on Poydras Street elevation were removed. AI # 449, the Italianate cast iron store front was removed and a transomed corner entrance was installed. In the 1940 Sanborn map only # 447 (in the middle of the present three) is shown retaining its front balcony. A 1949 photograph shows all front balconies gone as well as other changes noted above.

Two of the original five buildings have been lost (# 441 and # 439). The surviving three have lost some distinguishing features. However, the segmental arched keystone lintels of the second floor windows and the elaborately scrolled eave



Figure 15: 445-49 S. Rampart St. September 9, 2008

brackets have survived.

The buildings have suffered various losses and modifications over the decades. The recently added dormers, constructed in deviation of the approved drawings, detract from their architectural character. However, the three buildings are still readily identifiable as late Italianate masonry party wall structures and the buildings still retain their identity as early twentieth century commercial buildings that help to convey the historic role of South Rampart Street as a flourishing commercial/entertainment district for mainly African-Americans and immigrants.

Architectural Significance: *Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, specimen, inherently valuable for a study of period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.*

While there has been extensive demolition in this part of the Central Business District due to widening of streets and new high-rise construction, this block of historic buildings remains despite considerable odds. Since the early 1990s there has been a local effort to save and restore the 400 block of South Rampart Street. The New Orleans Music Hall of Fame, Inc., the New Orleans Jazz Commission, and the National Park Service organized to receive Community Development Block Grants and other funds to save the buildings. They have been successful in acquiring the 401-03 South Rampart Building which is currently in the planning phase of restoration. The project is utilizing historic rehabilitation tax credits and the plans have been reviewed by the Central Business District Architectural Review Committee and Commission. The buildings of the 400 block of South Rampart Street still retain their identity as an early twentieth century commercial buildings that help to convey the historic role of South Rampart Street as a flourishing commercial/entertainment district for African-Americans.

Historic Personages: *Identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state, or local history*

The buildings that remain on the 400 block of South Rampart Street are significant due to their association with important Jazz artists of New Orleans. Jazz pioneers such as Louis Armstrong, Clarence Williams, Buddy Bolden and Jelly Roll Morton performed in their halls, shopped in their stores and drank in their saloons.

Social, political, economic and cultural history of New Orleans: *Exemplify or reflects broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community.*

All four of the properties included in this designation are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Properties for their historic significance within the context of New Orleans' African-American history as rare survivors representing a once flourishing black entertainment/business district along South Rampart Street. In 1990, in recognition of New Orleans' critical importance to the birth of jazz, Congress passed Public Law 101-499 that authorized and directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Smithsonian, to conduct a study of the suitability and feasibility of preserving and interpreting the origins of jazz in New Orleans. On October 31, 1994, the findings of that study resulted in Congress creating the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park and the New Orleans Jazz Commission. The 400 block of South Rampart Street played a significant role in the early development of jazz history and the cultural history of New Orleans.

Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that 401-03 South Rampart Street, 413-15 South Rampart Street, 427-31 South Rampart Street, and 445-49 South Rampart Street be designated as a landmark called 400 Block of South Rampart Street based on their architectural significance, association with historic personages and influence on the cultural history of New Orleans and the Nation.

Report prepared by:

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Photographs from Courtesy the Williams Research Collection.